LOOKING BACK.

BY J. E. PANTON.

Is it a dreary process, this looking back, this gazing once more over the road along which we have travelled, sometimes so joyfully, sometimes so wearily? Is it good or is it bad to pause for just a moment now, when the fire burns low and the lamps are not yet lighted, and try to remember the steps we have taken, the way by which we have travelled thus far on our journey towards the end of this mortal life of ours?

Only good, I think, can come from such a retrospect. It may be that tears will fall, that we shall feel once more the sting and smart that were so painful, that we almost thought we had received our death-blow when our first friend failed us; or our first sorrow told us that life here was not all bright and fair—taking our reluctant hands in hers, and whispering that she came in love, the while we saw nothing but sorrow and anguish; or it may be that our cheeks will flush with shame as we recollect, painfully and mournfully, things we have said and done when we were young and foolish, and before we had begun to realise that other folks had lived before us, and knew even more of the world than we did. Still, we shall learn much even now by such looking back, the while we sit quietly and recognise how much nearer God we are, than when we were young, how much more we can understand of that wonderful Fatherhood that we never comprehended, never really loved, until we were hearing the stern truth, and could see far more plainly what life meant, than we could when we were enduring the strife. We were so busy fighting, and growing, and carving out our own way, as we thought, that we could not understand or even know of, the guiding hand that was never lacking, that never failed us, even though we had refused it many and many a time.

"When the fire burns low."

It all returns at such a twilight hour as this. The children have gone away and left us for awhile; they have to-morrow to prepare for, or such and such a party to think and plan about, and we are alone. Work has tired us, and oh, how easily our bodies seem to tire nowadays! The house has been upset, things have worried us. Now let Peace sit by, while in her unseen company we lift the veil, and the procession of pictures begins to glide by, and for a while we are young and gay once more.

Is it well to pause here, and stand for a moment by this grave? Sorrow, surely, only will rise from the past, and we shall be grieved and troubled more than ever by contemplation of that grassy mound. Not so. Often and often since she died, at such an hour as this, I could have well believed she is not dead, not even sleeping; for I have felt her come near, have heard her low voice whisper counsel, the while I have recollected that it was better for her to go than to remain to grow old and feeble; this she could not have borne. She could bear to lay down her burden early, to learn earlier than most, the solution of those problems we have so often discussed so anxiously, yearning to pierce a mystery dread enough, dark enough in youth, but easy of comprehension when we, too, have reached the summit and are only looking back. I think that yew-shaded grave below the Dorset hills is the brightest spot sometimes in the long way. Once more we talk together, she and I; once more we eagerly face life and love, and believe that from both we can demand what experience shall teach us. We can only learn by slow

degrees, and once more we are disappointed together, together gird at that which will not bend its will to ours, together plunge into the quagmire and misery called unbelief, and together contemplate death; and then we part for awhile, if that can be called parting that takes her away only out of the turmoil, allowing her to return at such a blessed time as this!

But perhaps we receive most help, when we are tired and feel old and worn-out, by looking back at the time when Love came singing by and caught us in his toils. We cannot believe our hearts ever fluttered; that it was we who planned how to look fair and sweet in the eyes of the dull, middle-aged master of the house who is the children's father, the bread-winner, the husband and willing horse; that when we did not meet by mere accident we spent the sweet May night in bitter tears; that life itself became a wilderness when he spoke to some one else before he did to us, and that we actually blushed when he looked at us, and that happiness meant his presence, and nothing else! Ah, if life's chariot-wheels are flagging, if we are old and commonplace now, we can become romantic in one moment! We have nothing to do but look back, and it is all ours once more—all ours so truly that when he comes in tired from work, and taking our hands in his, says nothing but that he is tired and that the snow is going, we are both young lovers once more, and cannot understand who the tall maiden is who rushes in on our silence, suggests that we are wasting our time, and that the lamps should be lighted, for it is almost dinner-time, and who laughs impertinently should he be so romantic as to kiss the brow where once the pale hair lay golden-bright, and suggests, with a suspicion of a sneer, that we are too old for such nonsense. Nonsense! ah, no! not nonsense to her in another year or two, when to her, too, will come young Love, or for good or ill; but she will never understand him until she too can look back at her twilight times, and really understand that, despite commonplaceness, business habits, even the all-prosaic City, there is no love like that which has lasted years, that looks dead to an outsider, but that revives again—ay, with blushes, roses, darts, and all complete—and that is all the sweeter because it is sure, because words are not wanted, and because it needs nothing save clasping hands, to lure back once more its old self from the shadows that gather as evening falls and threatens to obscure our vision of what has been.

It is when we are looking back that we understand that what we have once had, nothing, not Time itself, can take from us really and truly!

Other graves lie thickly, gleaming like blessed lamps of hope along our way; but our friends are as truly ours as they have ever been. Here is his likeness looking at us while we write; his very laugh, his merry voice, ring in our ears. We remember how he looked, what he said, the aspect of his garments—nay, the very scent of gorse and peat-smoke and the open-air feeling he ever brought in with him; and he is all our own, just as much ours as ever, for memory brings him back, and we know that he can never be angry, or hurt, or cold, or weary any more, and that the while we cannot lose him or forget him, he is away in a brighter, happier country, the delights of which he will show us some day; just as he used to show us the haunts of the wild-fowl, and the homes of many and many a strange, shy bird or beast! These graves, therefore, only remind us of our friends; they do not, cannot hold that which is ours now, as it was in the days when we could be made to sorrow for their pain or sickness, or when we could dread lest estrangement or misunderstanding should come between us!

From looking back we obtain, too, fresh knowledge which shall enable us to help these children on their way. Naturally, this can only be done insensibly. We cannot give them what they will not take; indeed, then the world would grow perfect all at once. They will not avail themselves of our experience; they would not be mortals if they would; but without unduly forcing on them what, if they could but know it, would be a far more precious inheritance than gold and jewels and a silver store; we can remember our own youth, see our own mistakes, and so have patience continually renewed to enable us to manage the wilful creatures, to bear us bravely over the many disappointments they cause us. Because we can think how the disappointments we, too, caused our parents were not intentional, it surely makes us not only bear with, but enjoy the innocent gaities, the constant craving for change and pleasure, that we remember were once ours; and that are simply the stirrings and cravings of the young soul and body before settling down to the real purpose of life, and that are not—what in our vision they appear at first sight to be—the mere impatience of control, the yearning for excitement, that seem to us to be so very reprehensible.

Unless she can spare time for looking back, it is impossible for any mother to manage her home and her household well. She must rest, or the over-strained nerves will react on the children, and will make the house miserable by an irritability she, poor soul, is the first to deplore, the first to strive against. She must pause, and think, and remember, because by this she learns once more from experience how to legislate for the young lives around her—by remembering the time when she, too, had no responsibility and was in her turn legislated for; and she must commune once more with her own youth, the old days when Love and she were soul to soul, and when she, too, did not understand quite as much as she does now.

Let the twilight gather! we have had the day; the work is over; the night cometh when no man can work; truly, but it only brings another, brighter day. But if we, who are in the twilight, can sit quiet, we have only to look back for others. We have to gain strength for them only. We have nothing to do with the night, and we can spend many a happy moment, many a blessed hour, if we make a habit of this retrospection.

THE MISTLETOE.

THIS "true lover's vine" is one of the most remarkable parasitic plants in the world. In ancient times, when found upon the oak, which was rare, it was an object of superstitious regard among the Druids. It grows in the tops of trees, shooting out from the branches like a scion from one tree grafted into another. It grows on most of the deciduous trees of the South, but oftenest on the oak, chestnut, and sweet gum. The mistletoe-bough is an evergreen, and growing on deciduous trees, it present sin winter the strange appearance of a branch covered with leaves of brilliant green on a tree that is otherwise divested of its foliage. The bark is of a deep green, and the wood is exceedingly brittle. It is generally thought that the mistletoe springs from a seed which is carried by birds or by the wind from one tree to another. Lodging in a crevice of the bark, it sprouts, and the root, insinuating itself into the live wood, derives its support after the manner of a graft or bud inserted in a fruit-tree. The ancient Druids thought that the mistletoe-bough possessed wonderful magical powers, and its name is often mentioned in the ancient legends of Brittany.

SUPPERS AND BREAKFASTS.

MENU.

Supper.—Tripe and onion sauce. Rice blancmange and jam.

Breakfast.—Scalloped lobster; rusks and milk.

Tripe and Onions.

Materials.—1 lb. tripe; 3 onions; 1 pint milk; flour, 1 tablespoonful; pepper and salt.

Directions.—Wash the tripe thoroughly with warm (not boiling) water, heat it till near boiling point, but do not allow it to boil, or it would be hard and tough. Pour away the water, and scrape the tripe thoroughly with an old sharp knife, till quite clean. Now put it into the inner stew-pan of a double one, with plenty of water in both pans (or into a brown-necked jar of water, standing in a saucepan of water), and stew for six hours, without boiling.

Pour off the liquor (which will make excellent soup, with the addition of vegetables and sago or rice), and cut the tripe into small neat pieces. Place these again in the stewpan, with half a pint of milk and half a pint of water, and simmer for an hour; then take out the tripe, lay it in a dish, cover it with onion sauce, and serve hot. Time, 8 hours.

Onion Sauce.

Peel three good-sized onions, and boil them in water for half an hour. Take them out, and chop them finely. Mix a large tablespoonful of flour evenly with half a pint of milk, and the chopped onions, pepper and salt, bring it to boiling point, and boil for ten minutes, stirring often.

This dish, immortalised by Toby Veck, in Dickens' "Christmas Chimes," is both wholesome and nice when well cooked. But it must never be allowed to boil, or it will be tough and leathery, and requires careful preparation and attention. The use of a double stewpan, however, makes it much more easy to cook; it is a difficult task, otherwise, to prevent the milk and water from boiling. This should be added to the liquor for soup from the previous stewing, and made into soup for dinner the next day.

Ground Rice Blancmange and Jam.

Materials.—Ground rice, 6 ozs.; milk, 1 quart; jam, ½ lb.: white sugar, 1 tablespoonful; 3 bay leaves.

Directions.—Mix the ground rice evenly with half the milk; put the rest of the milk with the sugar into a lined saucepan, and simmer the bay leaves (tied together with a long string) in it till the milk is flavoured, then take them out, add the ground rice and milk, bring it to boiling point, stirring often, and when it thickens on the spoon take it off the fire, beat it up sharply for five minutes, put it at the side of the fire, and let it simmer, stirring all the time, for ten minutes. Dip a quart mould into cold water, pour the blancmange into it, and turn it out when cold. Small jam-pots may be substituted for a mould, and make a pretty dish. Garnish with jam. Time, 3 hours (to allow it to get cold).

BREAKFAST.

Scalloped Lobster.

Materials.—1 tin of lobster; 1 lb. breadcrumbs; ¼ lb. clarified fat; pepper and salt.

Directions.—Rub a shallow dish with half the fat, line it thickly with breadcrumbs, place the lobster in this, sprinkling it with pepper and salt and breadcrumbs, cover with the rest of the breadcrumbs, and bake in a quick oven till brown, which it should be in twenty or thirty minutes. Serve hot in the tin dish, if bright, or on a fish paper, with sprigs of parsley to garnish. Time, 1 hour.

Tinned salmon or oysters may be used instead of the lobster, if preferred. The breadcrumbs can be prepared beforehand, as it takes some time to rub them through an iron-wire sieve; stale bread should be used, and the breadcrumbs closely covered till they are used in the morning. If this plan be followed, half an hour will be enough time to make the dish.

Rusks and Milk.

Materials.—1 dozen rusks: 1 quart milk.

Directions.—Heat the milk in a saucepan until it boils. Place two rusks in each of six small basins (or soup-plates), and pour part of the milk into each basin. Serve at once, with sugar, or a pinch of salt, as preferred. Time, 10 minutes.

This will be found an excellent change from porridge, etc., for children; there is nothing more valuable, too, as a meal, for those who suffer from a weak digestion, as it is particularly light, as well as highly nourishing. For an invalid a small pinch of salt should be added, instead of using sugar.

Expenses for Supper and Breakfast.

Tripe, 6d.; onions, 1d.; milk, 10d.; tin of lobster, 6½d.; fat, 2d.; bread, 4d.; rusks, 2d.; bay leaves, ½d.; sugar and jam, 4d. Total, 3s. Average, 6d. each for six persons.

I. L. Richmond.

Plum Pudding.

The following recipe for a good plain Christmas pudding will be found useful in families where there are young children or invalids, for whom the richer kinds would be unsuitable. It has the advantage of being economical also, for the quantities given will make two puddings of 3 lbs. each.

Ingredients.—1 lb. raisins; 1 lb. currants; 1 lb. bread crumbs; 1 lb. flour; ¾lb. sugar; ¾ lb. suet; 1 pint of milk; 2 oz. candied peel; a little mixed spice (or half a nutmeg if that is preferred) and a large teaspoonful of baking powder.

Directions.—Stone the raisins carefully; or, if sultanas are used, wash them and dry them in a cloth. Wash the currants in cold water, then put them into a colander and pour boiling water over them. Dry them and look over them carefully. Mix all the dry ingredients thoroughly together, then add the milk gradually, and stir the pudding well. Butter the basins, fill them and flour the puddings over the top. Dip the pudding cloths into boiling water and tie them down firmly over the basins, and boil the puddings for at least 4 hours.

How to use the Crusts of Bread.

In making Christmas puddings the bread is often wasted, but it may be made into a very nice pudding. Cut it into very small pieces, and then weighing half a pound of bread, pour over it half a pint of boiling milk. Let it soak until quite soft, then beat it up with a fork until there are no lumps left. Take the yolks of two eggs, a dessert-spoonful of sugar, and a few drops of vanilla flavouring. Add these to the bread and beat them well together; put into a buttered pie-dish, and bake until a pale brown. Take the two whites of the eggs, and a little salt, and beat them to a stiff froth (with a knife) on a plate. Add some sifted white sugar and a little flavouring.

Put a thin layer of jam over the bread pudding, and then pile the white of egg over that, and put it into the oven for a few minutes.

THE GIRLS OF BOURTON.

BY SARAH TYTLER,

Author of "Girls," "A Cast in the Waggon," etc.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW KITTY.

THROUGH Kitty's lattice window, which could be opened in fine weather, she had a bird's-eye view from where she lay in her dreary, endless confinement, of the village street and the passers-by. Gradually her attention grew concentrated on the doings of Job Timbs, a joiner in a small way, who worked partly in his back yard, partly in a little shed beyond the row of houses and gardens opposite Kitty's house. He was constantly going to and fro with his wood, and his saws and planes. Job was a contemporary of Aaron Coppock, and considerably mixed up with him in business; Aaron getting the greater part of the wood for his faggots and the chips which were his stock-in-trade from his neighbour, the joiner. Job, however commendable for his industry, was not a particularly interesting character. He was not only in the iron grey age, with a stubbly beard, increasing in stubbliness from Monday till Saturday, when it underwent a weekly shave, he was reputed to be "a tough customer," and crotchety, an old bachelor who contrived to do for himself without an atom of help from womankind. One of Job's queer fads was to keep an old bull-terrier, which in addition to its lack of all good points, including the faintest approach to canine comeliness, had been badly lamed in Farmer Bryce's rabbit warren. Job had refused to be laughed out of his regard for "Prince"—the most plebeian of princes, because of his unmitigated ugliness. Prince's master equally refused to be laughed out of his favour for his four-footed ally on account of the unfortunate brute's accident and consequent infirmity. Kitty lay and looked at Prince limping backwards and forwards after Job. The joiner was a rigid disciplinarian, and would not permit the dog to hobble about at pleasure among other village dogs, gathering what solace was left for him, in case he should get into further trouble. Job was also short of temper, and when the dog did not come to heel with

"Where Kitty lay in her dreary, endless confinement."

the speed and precision to be desired, his patron did not always consider extenuating circumstances, but dealt poor Prince kicks and cuffs, as if he had been the fleetest and soundest of satellites. But Prince, bull-terrier though he was, had an infinitely sweeter and meeker temper than that of his protector. The dog took all the man's tyranny and injustice submissively and unresentfully. He laboured to give satisfaction under difficulties. He made the most of the situation, sniffed cheerfully about as far as he dared, wagged his stump of a tail, cocked his off ear, and returned Job's summary administration of punishment by three-legged bounds at the punisher's side, looks of unabated trust in the grim face, and long, loving licks of the horny hand that had chastised him, whenever he could reach it.

"That beast is better than me," Kitty Coppock suddenly said to herself, as she watched the pair. It was the first admission she had made of possible wrong-doing on her part. The next step was to consider whether in her better moments she could not do a little sewing in addition to drying dishes, and folding up the lighter articles in a washing, to help in her maintenance. Kitty made the attempt and persevered in it, in spite of her weakness and the pain in her back, which she could not defy for more than ten minutes at a time. However, the doctor did not disapprove of the exertion. He did not think that to employ her hands—of which she retained the use—in doing a little sewing, when she was able for it, would materially alter her condition. Certainly the effort did her physical good, in one respect, it rid Kitty of the torment, vulgarly known as "the fidgets," which is merely a nervous inconvenience to people in a normal state of health, but to the chronic invalid an infliction only second to that of acute pain.

"A view of the village street and the passers by."

Old Lady Vernon, whose park paling abutted on the common at one side, who had always taken a kindly, pottering interest in the place, had a fine lady visitor to whom she told the sad case of Kitty Coppock. This lady had no previous knowledge of the wants and trials of the poor; neither had she taken trouble with girls in any rank, but for reasons of her own she resolved to befriend Kitty, if possible. She said she knew a new sort of work which she had learnt in a kind of desperate self-defence, when she found life particularly slow and unendurable, not long before. She was willing to do what she could to teach it to Kitty; and the lady believed if the girl would pick it up and do it decently, she might earn fair wages, since the work was at present in great repute as a trimming for ladies' and children's dresses; and being not only pretty, but very suitable and lasting, it was not likely to pass soon out of fashion.

The lady, Miss Fitzpatrick, made quite a stir when she appeared at the Coppocks' cottage. She was not one of those young and lovely, gentle and saintly visitors of the poor of whom Kitty had occasionally read. In the first place Miss Fitzpatrick was past her youth, in the second she had a haughty and imperious carriage and bearing, and in her sunken dark eyes there were sadder fires even than shone in Kitty's blue ones. Miss Fitzpatrick came into the cottage not exactly as if her presence there were an honour, but unquestionably as if she were entitled to rule when she had come. She announced with so much candour that Kitty need not thank her, for it was to please the lady's fancy she was there, to show the girl how to do "smocking," that the obliged person, felt greatly inclined to request the conferrer of the obligation to go away again. But there were two reasons against this course. Kitty was not without the consciousness of a faint fellow-feeling with her restless, aggressive visitor. The girl was not sure whether, in the perversity of human nature, she did not, in her present

mood, like the new-comer better as she was, with her evident faults and her far from happy look, than if she had been the perfect being who had been described to Kitty. The second reason was that even in Kitty's privileged invalid state she was considerably daunted by the stranger.

Indeed, Miss Fitzpatrick lost her patience so completely in the first mistake Kitty made in following her directions, that the lady herself was ashamed of the outburst. The words, "Oh, dear, what a stupid donkey you are, to be sure!" were hardly out of her mouth, when she sprang up and took one or two turns up and down the small room, and Kitty could hear her say to herself quite loud, "And what a hardened wretch *you* are!"

When Miss Fitzpatrick left, causing Kitty's heart to sink by the dogmatic intimation that she was coming again on the following day, she gave Mrs. Coppack a present of money, which the old woman showed exultingly to her daughter the next moment.

"There's for bearing her tantrums! Kitty, lass, if you can't learn, you mun pretend to, for this is just a right-down windfall. One might stand half a dozen prying domineering calls, and playing at teaching you summat, for a deal less. It amuses she, and it does you no harm beyond the worriting, which you'll bear like a good lass, for your father's sake and mine, as are doing so much for you."

Kitty flushed all over her wan, pinched face, but said nothing.

The moment Miss Fitzpatrick came again, and the two were left alone together, says Kitty, with more respect than she would have shown in her washing days, and at the same time with a simple dignity which did not belong to her then, "Madam, I beg you not to give mother a big sum of money again. It may be little to you, but there is them as needs it more, if you have the heart to give it. We are not so poor as that comes to—the Board that looks after the old, and them as is not able to work, like me," she explained, in answer to a puzzled look on Miss Fitzpatrick's face; "allows me a couple of loaves a week, and the vicar he have got me on an incurable fund. If so be I can sew a bit, and learn what you're so good as to teach me, we'll be none so ill off."

Miss Fitzpatrick stared; however, she did not dispute Kitty's right to decline the money; even the lady's strong will yielded to the earnest protest.

"It's a temptation to poor folks to offer them a lump of money," said Kitty again, half humbly, half indignantly; "as they grows old they grows frighteneder and graspinger, and my illness has given my folks a shock like. But they've been honest and hard-working; they never begged—never; and they're a good father and mother to me—they've a lot to bear from me," ended Kitty, with a heavy sigh.

Miss Fitzpatrick stared again, and was silent, like Kitty the day before.

In spite of the agitating nature of the conversation, Kitty learned better during the second lesson and every other lesson, and, as she had been fond of pretty things in her day, she felt a dawning satisfaction in being qualified to accomplish creditably that quaint, revived art of "smocking," with all its mysteries of honeycombing, chaining, crossing, and flourishing.

It was a small compensation to poor Mrs. Aaron Coppock for the sudden stoppage of the golden supplies, on which she had counted too confidently, to find that the accomplishment which Lady Vernon's guest was trying to impart to Kitty was no novelty after all, and nothing so far removed from such humble folks as the Coppocks.

"If it ain't the patterns which old daddy—father's daddy—had worked on his smocks! I do believe I have one of them laid away in a box to this day. Granny, as did it, let me see some of the stitches, and gave me the smock—it were on green linen—for a pattern when I were patching my quilt afore my marriage. We ain't so far behind as we thought ourselves."

The smocking prospered, and as the news of Kitty's mastery of it was carried to St. Ambrose's she had many profitable commissions, so that her earnings almost amounted to those of former years.

Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Coppock were now inclined to boast and make much of their Kitty's doings. Kitty herself relished the returning sense of independence and modest power, and was consoled by it for many an ache and twinge.

In the course of the winter a luxury, which Kitty could not have compassed for herself, arrived to her by rail and carrier, with nothing to indicate the donor beyond the label, "London," on the parcel, and the card attached to it, on which was written, in addition to the address, "For Kitty Coppock. She need not scruple to accept it, since it was come upon by chance in the garret, and it is not of the smallest use to anybody here, if it is not of service to her at Bourton."

"It is from Miss Fitzpatrick," said Kitty, "and her does not wish me to thank her, though I should like to do it now—I didn't afore—both for this great india-rubber thing as I do not know what to do with, and for teaching me smocking. I should just like to tell her once how I've got on, and about mother's old stitches, and the pattern on grandfather's smock, as I've fitted into Miss Fitzpatrick's patterns."

The doctor soon enlightened Kitty as to the use of the water-bed. It afforded immense relief to the girl's suffering back, so that sleep, which had been frequently banished from the hard, lumpy mattress on which she had lain stretched, returned in a great measure, and Kitty felt in an elysium, and could hardly keep from dreaming that she was getting well and strong again.

"I must thank her," said Kitty, with a longing gasp. "I must smock a dressing-gown for her, like that I've done for Squire Percival's lady. Lady Vernon will get it sent to my lady, and she need but glance at it and toss it aside. At least it will show her as how I profited by her lessons, and that I am not thankless, though she don't care for my thanks."

In place of being angry at the disregard shown to her wishes, and the liberty taken with her, Miss Fitzpatrick wrote Kitty a wonderfully kind letter, in which the writer said that she would wear the dressing-gown and keep it all her life, not merely because the pupil had far outrun the teacher, but because Kitty had spent so much time and trouble on the gift. It was the finest specimen of smocking Miss Fitzpatrick had yet seen. She had shown it to several of her friends, and they all said the same. She enclosed a list of commissions, and she also sent a pile of materials for smocking, to be done in Bourton and forwarded to London. They nearly took Kitty's breath away, and were loudly talked of in the village for the next three months at least.

But what went still more to Kitty's heart was that Miss Fitzpatrick wrote farther, in a few hurried, blotted lines, that she hoped Kitty was a little happier as well as less suffering, for a great trouble had gone out of her own life since she had last communicated with Kitty, and the whole world, which had been darkened, was changed to her, so that she could not confess her shortcomings and praise her Maker sufficiently.

When summer returned some friends were able to send

Kitty a folding-down chair, on which the girl could be laid and taken into the garden. Kitty had never been out of doors since that doleful May morning when she was brought home on the ironing-board. It was May again, with the apple-trees in blossom, and the lilies and wallflower scenting the air. It was the same homely cottage garden in which Kitty had stood, and walked, and worked, often unwillingly, a thousand times. Beyond was the common, with the gorse in blossom, and the white flocks of geese, and young donkeys dotting their own domain. There she had been accustomed to spread out her share of Widow Field's washing, and there girls and women were busy at that moment in the old occupation. How little she had cared to look round her formerly, how little she had thought of the blue sky, the green sprouting grass, the lark's song, and each familiar flower. If the water-bed had been rest and ease to her weary young body, the summer world of nature was a vision of beauty, a heaven of bliss to her heart and soul, after those many months passed in her dull, close garret, and in the poor little back room to which she had been carried downstairs. Why had she not noticed or cared before for this beautiful world, which had always been hers, long ere she was broken-backed and bedridden? A hundred texts and truths which she had heard and failed to grasp ever since her childhood, in church, in school, even in a ruder, more primitive form from her narrow, ignorant father and mother and Milly, came floating across her mind, and almost overpowered her with their balm for every woe, their peace and joy unspeakable. It was not in what any man or woman had, whether of youth, or strength, or beauty, or worldly wealth that the worth of life consisted, only in what a man or woman was, in truth, and tenderness, and reverence. If Kitty had only known this long ago, when she was well, how fine life might have been, how little she would have cared for the poor trifles which had occupied her, and often fretted her till she was a burden to herself and to everybody round her. How very differently she would have borne even that great trial in her life, since she would still have had the best things, and One would have been with her to help her to carry her cross as He had borne His. And while Kitty lay with half-closed eyes, and tears, which were not without their sweetness, glistening on her white cheeks, He came to her and stood beside her in the old garden. Every bush and plant He knew, too, and had transformed and irradiated. He whose presence makes heaven stooped to speak to silly, rebellious Kitty; He told her that it was not too late for her, that there was no too late with Him, for He was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He said He had been with her all the time, and made her understand what half-crazed William Blake sang with Divine inspiration:—

> "Think not thou canst sigh a sigh
> And thy Maker is not by;
> Think not thou canst weep a tear
> And thy Maker is not near."

He had sent the accident, because, if she could only have seen it, that was the very best thing that could have happened to her, and its terrible discipline was what she had wanted to deliver her immortal spirit from ghastly pitfalls and deadly perils, and to make it whole and well, pure and noble. It was He also who brought Job Timbs's Prince and sent Miss Fitzpatrick, and would freely give her all things.

THE END.

"HE INCREASETH STRENGTH."

If thou art weary with the task
  Each day is bearing to thy lot,
And if thy life for rest doth ask,
  God calleth thee—forget Him not;
Oh, come thou to the Master's feet,
And thou shalt own His resting sweet.

If secret cares thy mind oppress,
  And tears downfall when none can see,
He knoweth all thy least distress,
  The deepest load that burdens thee;
Oh, steal thou to His feet away,
They learn His rest who trustful pray.

Work not *alone* through heat of noon,
  Try not to live from Christ apart;
Thy soul would faint and falter soon,
  If severed from His tender heart:
God calleth thee—oh, weary, come!
Within His arms abides thy home.

Thy hands are tired, thy feet are worn,
  Thy nerves are troubled, faint, and weak;
But all day long, at eve, at morn,
  The Strength Eternal thou canst seek;
A shelter for each heart opprest
Remains, my sister, on His breast.

Keep not one burden on thy soul—
  One lingering shade thy peace to dim;
Thy cares upon the Master roll,
  And open all thy heart to Him:
His grace, descending like the dew,
Thy hope, thy courage shall renew.

Life's highest secret dwelleth here—
  To think of God, to love His name,
To know Him as thy Refuge dear,
  Through surging changes still the same:
Oh, heart, 'mid all the noontide heat,
Make time to sit at Jesus' feet!

MARGARET HAYCRAFT.

"SPEAK GENTLY."

AN "OWER TRUE" TALE FOR MOTHERS.

BY GRACE STEBBING.

"WHAT a pretty little face your Charlie has, Mrs. Berryman!" said her young neighbour, Mrs. Sutton, one day, as she stood sunning her own little firstborn, an infant of a few months old, up and down the lane, and watching for her husband's return home. "I shall be glad enough if my little man here looks as sweet and good and nice, six years hence, as Charlie does. I've wished that many a time of late."

Mrs. Berryman went on energetically with her gardening, and snipped off two fine buds from her Gloire de Dijon, as well as the faded rose, as accompaniment to the sharp answer—

"Then in future you'd better spend your brains in wishing something else. Of all the tiresome, aggravating children for a mother to be plagued with, there surely never was one to beat my Charlie! If so be as wishes were any good, he'd not bide long before he was wished different, I can tell you."

Mrs. Sutton's kind face looked quite grieved as she listened. "Oh, I am so sorry to hear you say so," she said. "I certainly have been deceived by appearances for once, for I did think he must be such an honest, obedient, sweet-tempered little fellow."

"And who said as he wasn't?" was the unexpected retort. "What's the good of all that to poor, hardworking people, when the child's a fool besides?"

To that remark Mrs. Sutton made no reply, beyond a rather wide opening of her pleasant blue eyes; for she happened to have heard that little Charlie Berryman was a particularly clever scholar.

However, his mother paid no heed to the silence, and after a few moments she went on angrily—

"A stupid little useless, blundering, awkward idiot. Never a day passes, scarcely, but what he does some mischief; give him anything to hold or carry, and tell him never so many times to be careful, and down it goes smash. A body had much better speak to the wind. Stand a pail or a kettle down for a moment, where anybody with half an eye could see it, or a dustpan full of sweepings, and you may shout yourself hoarse, but he's sure to blunder over it."

As though by way of comment on this speech, the fair, gentle-looking boy at this moment came running out of the cottage door towards his mother, caught sight of the pail full of dead flowers and leaves as he was close upon it, was just swerving a few inches, enough to avoid it, when his mother suddenly caught sight of him, and screamed at him—"There you go, as usual, little idiot!"

And there he did go, as usual, most truly, for his mother's shout so startled him that he stumbled, and fell with a frightened cry, throwing over the pail, and cutting his lip against the brim.

His mother gave the trembling child a thorough shaking as she picked him up, and took him indoors, to wash the blood from his mouth, scolding him all the while.

Mrs. Sutton sighed, and bending over her baby she kissed it softly, whispering with a heart full of pitying tenderness, "Poor, poor little Charlie lad."

A few days passed. Mrs. Sutton was busy over the fire cooking her husband's supper, and a strange cat took advantage of her back being turned to come into the cottage, jump on the dresser, and drink the milk.

A soft little call of "Oh, Mrs. Sutton!" just without, caused her to look round only in time to be too late; that is to say, too late to save the milk, but not too late to see Charlie Berryman.

"I wish I had seen the cat sooner," he said, sympathisingly, as his companion looked into the empty basin.

Emily Sutton nodded her head. "Aye, dear, so do I. For Ben does like a drop of milk in his cocoa, and I'm afraid to go for more. If I lift baby he's sure to waken; and if I leave him, perhaps he'd wake while I was away."

"Could I stay and watch him?" asked Charlie, with shy eagerness.

The young mother shook her head, smiling.

"No. But I'll tell you what you could do for me. Run to the farm for the milk, if you would?"

A hand at once stretched out for the basin showed the willing assent.

Mrs. Sutton washed out pussy's leavings, and gave the bowl to the child; then suddenly bethought her of his mother's words. Her eyes rested first on her nice basin, then on the boy's face.

"But do you think you shall break that, little man?" she asked, anxiously.

Charlie lifted his eyes to hers, and shook his head. "No, I am not frightened now," he whispered; "you speak so gently."

"Stuff!" muttered an unseen auditor who hastily retreated from the other side of the garden hedge, as Charlie ran down on Mrs. Sutton's side of it on his errand.

The same individual was in the Suttons' cottage when, ten minutes later, Charlie returned, rosy and bright, with the basin brimming full of sweet, rich milk.

"And I haven't even spilled a drop," he said with innocent triumph, as Mrs. Sutton came forward and took it from him with a kind smile of thanks. She did so only just in time, for a voice called out at the same moment—

"Then it's bound to go down now."

And it certainly would have done so, had it not been safe in its owner's hands, for the child's trembled, and fell with a startled, low cry—"Mother!" and the rosy face grew pale.

Mrs. Berryman gave a short laugh. "Humph!" she exclaimed, sharply, "a pretty sort of a compliment you pay your mother, child, I must say, to look like that, at sight of her."

Inwardly, the sight of the boy's changed look and tone had been as a painful sting, for she truly loved him, although she had never yet troubled to rule sharp tongue or hasty temper for his gentle sake.

Once or twice, during the next few weeks, the picture of

his radiant, peaceful expression, as she saw him entering Mrs. Sutton's cottage door, with the safely-carried basin of milk, recurred to her mind, and a sharp pang shot through her heart as the other picture, of his altered expression at the sound of her voice, also followed the first.

But while thoughts were growing rather busy and importunate, and the mother was growing very jealous of Charlie's increasing liking for being "next door," where Mrs. Sutton's baby found in him a second and most careful nurse, tongue and actions still continued as brusque as ever, and the poor child's nervousness increased every day, till his face began to wear an habitual look of fear.

But a crisis was fast approaching. Mrs. Berryman was very busy with a great cleansing and scrubbing, and the meat-pie for dinner was sent to the bakehouse. As the time approached for the elder boys and their father to come home for the midday meal, Mrs. Berryman had still many things to do to get straight again, so Charlie must go to fetch back the pie. And he started, still trembling with the feeling of the push with which he had been dismissed on his errand, and the threatening warning still sounding in his ears—

"Now, you little stupid, dunderhead, just heed what you're at. You drop that pie, and you won't never forget it, as long as you live."

Very certainly his poor, remorseful mother never did.

Shaking in every limb with nervous trepidation Charlie came slowly along the village-street with the heavy pie, and on, up the lane. Mrs. Berryman caught sight of her husband, and shouted to Charlie even more impatiently than usual—

"Hurry, you little snail, you!"

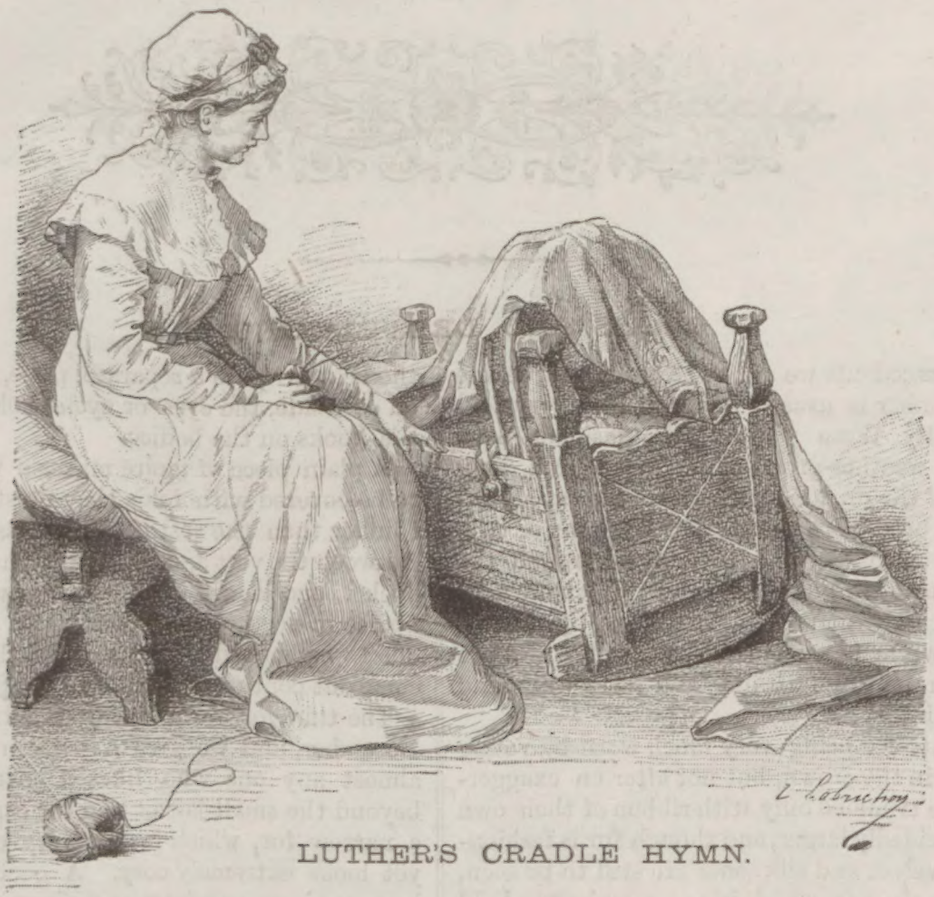
But even as she called her voice failed her.

For a moment the child swayed backwards and forwards. The next, the pie and Charlie both lay together on the gravel path.

It was not of so much consequence, however, that the dinner was wasted. Charlie lay between life and death, unconscious, and his parents and brothers had little appetite for food.

"He seems to me to have been frightened somehow or other," said the puzzled doctor, "to the verge of brain fever. He will need the very tenderest treatment in the future for years to come, or he will be made the victim of epileptic fits; harshness, and sudden outcries, should especially be avoided in his presence, if he is ever to grow strong and bright again."

Need it be said that his mother learnt to speak gently at last? She did love her gentle child, and the time had come for her to prove she did, or to lose the sweet face for ever out of her home.



LUTHER'S CRADLE HYMN.

Composed by Martin Luther for his children, and still sung by German mothers to their little ones.]

AWAY, in a manger,
No crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus
Lay down His sweet head,
The stars in the sky
Looked down where He lay;
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing,
The poor baby wakes;
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus!
Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle
To watch lullaby.

WOMEN AND DRESS.

Woman's love for dress has been the theme of many writers' discourse, and always will be. That love for extravagant clothes is at the root of many family disturbances, financial disgraces, and the one from which gray hair and wrinkles spring, is acknowledged. Yet, with all that is written, preached, and spoken, a woman without regard for her personal appearance is never a pleasant object.

There is a happy medium between either extreme, and when a woman strikes and maintains this medium she will find that a change is being wrought on her character. Take a perfect termagant, and dress her in well-fitting garments, suitable to the occasion, and if it is continued any length of time she will lose the shrillness from her voice and the acidity from her temper to a marked degree. If the slattern could be forced to bathe, put on clothes that would hide her physical defects and bring into prominence her good points, her backbone would assert itself, her feet learn their use, and her house gradually assume the proper framing for the jewel.

If little children could be always cleanly and comfortably clothed there would be fewer inmates in the reform schools. If from their infancy girls were so dressed that their clothing created no comment, that they accepted their clothes as they do the air they breathe, as being a necessity of life, and while becoming and harmonious, even their beauty be accepted as naturally as the beauty of a flower, clothes would be simply an accident, not an event, in life. Take a giddy girl and dress her in conspicuous colours, with a broad-brimmed hat set back on her head, and you simply emphasize her weakness. Dress the same girl in quiet colours, simply made dresses, and bonnets that are more for use than ornament, and her manner will be subdued, if not quiet. Take a girl devoid of self-assertion, a girl who has but faint individuality, and you can supply a certain amount of both qualities by dressing her so that her clothes have an individuality. Any observer will detect this moral influence of clothes who watches closely the manners of women in public places. An overdressed woman will have a self-conscious air that shows she values herself for her clothes.

We laugh at this, that we term a woman's weakness. We are driven, some of us, to the other extreme, and try to show our strength by ignoring such trifles as well-fitting clothes, suitable to time and season; we go farther, and show our indifference by ignoring the niceties of clean and dainty neckwear, but in doing this we sacrifice a desirable rest and repose. Dress should clothe a personality, not hide it. A woman's clothes should always be an expression of herself.

Mothers and teachers should be careful never to offend the developing senses by a neglect of the essentials of an agreeable outward appearance.—*Christian Union.*

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

According to all precedents we are to have another severe winter, for a wet summer is usually followed by a very cold winter. Consequently those who set the fashions have taken heed to the weather-prophets and prepared long coats and mantles of the dreadnought order, not at all unlike those that have been worn during the last year or two, but perhaps rather narrower, and without fur round the bottom. Many are made of plush and velvet, which are very heavy as well as costly materials, but more universally serviceable are the warm fancy cloths, many of which are fleecy on the inside, requiring no lining, and these will stand a little rain without injury.

Plain dark felt hats are being very much worn by young girls; they are high in the crown, but not after an exaggerated fashion, and are trimmed only with ribbon of their own colour. Muffs are decidedly larger, and though fur is fashionable, a great many velvet and silk ones are still to be seen, with the little bag at the top, which is so convenient to hold a pocket-handkerchief. Good serges and the material called Albert cloth are very much used again for winter dresses, and scarcely a bodice is to be seen without a vest. Comparatively few are fastened down the middle of the front, and it is rather an advantage, as they are not so apt to be soiled and get out of order by perpetual buttoning and unbuttoning. It is, however, much easier for amateurs to make a bodice in this way than fastening on one side. But supposing the difficulty conquered by means of a good pattern, the vest is quite a separate piece, hooking into the bodice on each side, the eyes or eyelet holes being on the vest and the hooks on the bodice.

A plain piece of moiré makes a very neat vest, but if it is to be covered with folds they must be of something much thinner than the rest of the dress, or it will look clumsy. Between the vest and the bodice should be inserted the watch pocket, and it will be found a very good plan to stitch the bodice in securely on the left side and leave only the right one to be hooked. If this is not done the hooks are apt to come out continually and cause gaps that are very ugly.

The time for warm out-door garments has fully set in by December, and we give a pattern of a cloak suitable for almost any one who likes a cover-all, and has advanced beyond the small jacket and fur cape age. It is trimmed with a narrow fur, which is not very expensive nor heavy, and yet looks extremely cosy. A good substitute for it, as we have said on previous occasions, is good astrachan cloth, cut in strips and neatly hemmed down on both sides. But fur, if untouched by moths, is very durable. Black or grey astrachan would look very neat on such a cloak, if made of black cloth; brown cloth would be more suitably trimmed with fur, and there is a dark green cloth, with a slightly rough surface, that looks remarkably well with the same trimming. Fancy cloths ought usually to be avoided, because they are more or less adulterated with cotton, and therefore soon look shabby and common, and it is desirable that a

cloak of this description should last several winters and look well to the end. One of the great secrets of adding smartness to a garment that is just a little bit cumbersome is to have a good strong waist ribbon, and fasten it exactly in the waist line to the central back and side seams, and have it a trifle tight, as it soon gives. Hooks and eyes are better to secure it with than strings, for they are apt to hang down in front, and look untidy if the cloak is open. Every prudent woman will put an inside breast pocket to her winter coat or jacket to hold her purse; and a couple of outside pockets, not too large, and neatly put on, are invaluable for pocket-handkerchiefs, letters, small parcels, etc., as they save unfastening the coat and rummaging in the dress pocket. Any gentleman who wears his clothes carefully will tell you that the front of a great coat gets shabby far less by the necessary buttoning and unbuttoning when taken on and off, than by perpetually undoing it to look at his watch, and so forth; and the same holds good of women's garments.

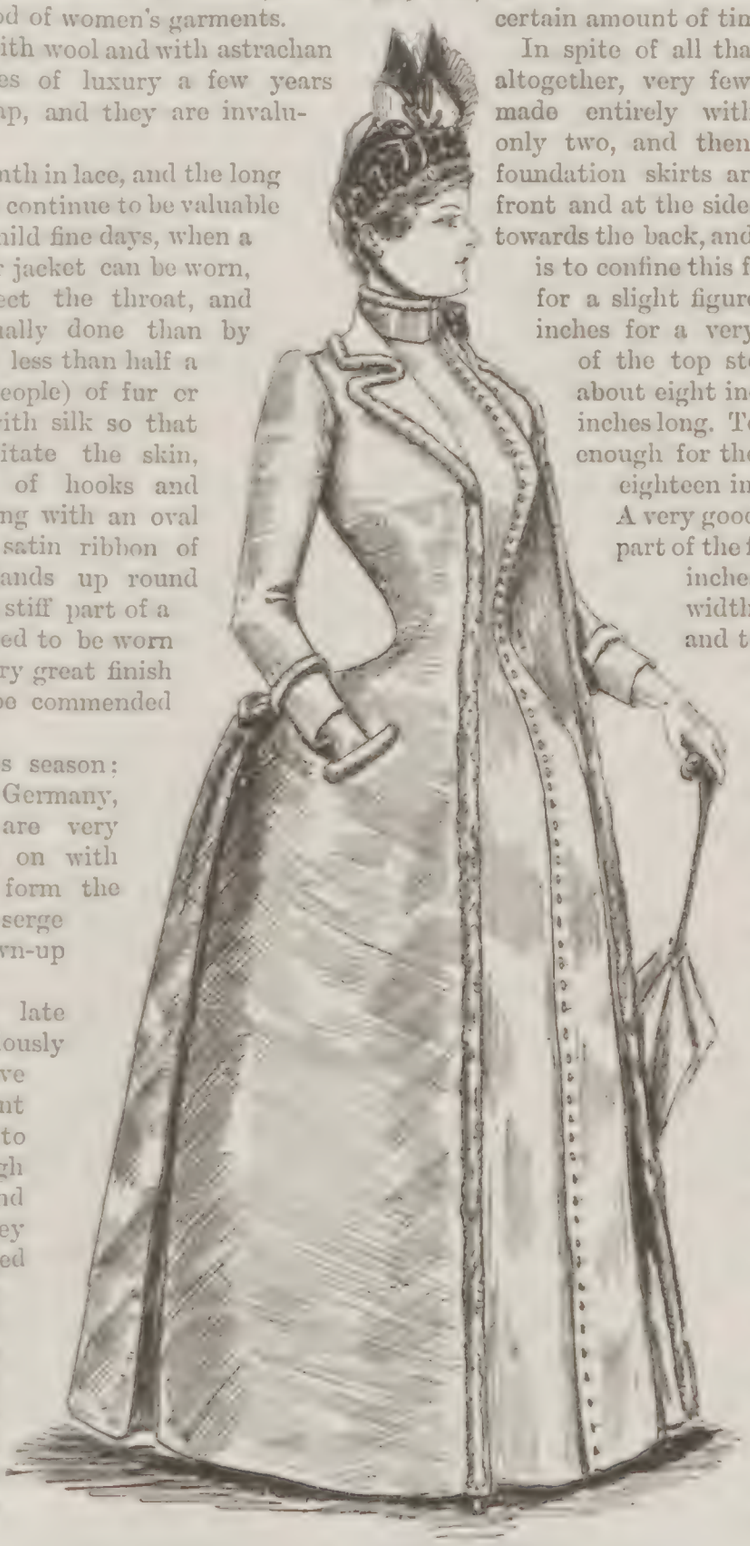
The dark kid gloves, lined with wool and with astrachan backs, that were such articles of luxury a few years ago, have now got very cheap, and they are invaluable as comforts.

There is a great deal of warmth in lace, and the long lace scarves of last summer will continue to be valuable all through the winter. On mild fine days, when a comparatively small mantle or jacket can be worn, the great thing is to protect the throat, and this cannot be more effectually done than by getting a small piece (rather less than half a yard is sufficient for most people) of fur or feather trimming, lining it with silk so that it may be neat and not irritate the skin, and sewing on a couple of hooks and eyes, and hiding the fastening with an oval rosette or double bow of satin ribbon of the same colour. This stands up round the neck something like the stiff part of a gentleman's stock, such as used to be worn thirty years ago, and is a very great finish to the neck, and much to be commended to the wearers of hats.

Braids are very cheap this season: most of them come from Germany, more's the pity, but they are very good indeed, and when put on with the sewing machine they form the best possible trimming for serge dresses, whether for grown-up people or children.

The pockets, which of late years have been so mysteriously hidden in the back drapery, have given way to a great extent to loose pockets, fastened to the waist with a cord, through which the band of a round bodice can be slipped. They are not unlike an enlarged watch pocket such as may sometimes be seen at the head of a bed, and the back is quite flat and stiffened either with buckram or a piece of cardboard. The front is most useful if put on full with a heading and a piece of elastic run through, which keeps it from gaping open. A silk cord sewn all round and finished with a few firm loops at the bottom, forms the best trimming. One or two such pockets will serve for several black dresses, but coloured ones should be either of the same stuff as the dress, or of velvet or plush or satin, whichever it may be trimmed with. The only difficulty about these pockets is that they swing and look awkward on persons who move about quickly, and are more suitable for those who sit still a good deal.

A very good way of ornamenting a serge or cloth dress is to braid a scroll or other pattern on the front width reaching not quite so high as the knee, to have a plain drapery hanging almost like an overskirt at the back and sides, and in the two front corners of it braid an ornament just filling up the corner and pointing backwards. Braiding on the front of the bodice to simulate a vest, and on the cuffs, is also required, and the dress looks very complete, at the cost of a certain amount of time, but very little money.



In spite of all that is said about abjuring steels altogether, very few winter dresses seem to be made entirely without them, though they are only two, and then small and unobtrusive. The foundation skirts are made very close-fitting in front and at the sides, and all the fulness is drawn towards the back, and set into the band. A good rule is to confine this fulness to six inches of the band for a slight figure, seven for a full one, or eight inches for a very stout figure. The distance of the top steel from the waist should be about eight inches, and it should be thirteen inches long. Ten inches below it is quite near enough for the second steel, which should be eighteen inches long.

A very good rule for the width of the front part of the foundation skirt is to allow nine inches from the middle of the front width to the end of the top steel, and twenty-two to the end of the second steel. The slope continued in the same proportion will give the right width at the hem. Tailors' linen, black or white, forms capital foundation skirts, and four yards will make one. The price is from 8d. to 10d. a yard, and the great advantage of using this material is that when the dress is taken to pieces in order to be cleaned or washed and re-made, the foundation can have the steels removed and be washed. Dirt is none the less noxious for being invisible, and it is so nice to have even old and contrived garments clean and sweet.

The pattern of the cloak mentioned above may be had by enclosing 1*s. in stamps to "M. L.," at the office of* THE MOTHERS' COMPANION. *Every effort is made to dispatch patterns promptly, but we cannot guarantee to send them by return of post.*

INDEX.

Abolitionists, The American—Prudence Crandall and Lucretia Mott. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 173
Aunt Ethel's "Rainy-day Club." By Emma C. Hewitt 21, 42, 55, 123
Austen, Jane. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 43

"Baby," The Folk-lore of. By Emmeline Braine 140
Baillie, Joanna. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 149
Barbauld, Mrs. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 133
Bread-winners. By Eliza Clarke 89, 125, 155

Cheap Dinners. By I. L. Richmond 31
College by Post, A. By Mary L. G. Petrie, B.A. 107
Co-operative Stores, Working Men and. By E. C. Sharland ... 26
Crofters, A Visit to the. By Emma Conway Clarke 39

David Köhler: a Tale of the Flood 72
Destiny of Old Shoes, The ... 144
Dora Coyne; or, Hid in the Heart. By Jessie M. E. Saxby, Author of "Gerta's Newrsgaf," "Lindeman Brothers," etc. 1, 17, 33, 49, 65, 81, 97, 113, 129, 151, 161
Dora, Sister. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 119
Dorothy Wordsworth. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 101
Dress and Dressmaking 16, 32, 47, 63, 79, 95, 110, 128, 144, 158, 186

Edgeworth, Maria. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 53, 75

Factory-girls at Saffron Hill, Amongst the. By Mary Canney 167

Gilbert, Elizabeth. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 24
GIRLS. By Sarah Tytler—
X.—The Good a Girl can Do... 13
XI.—The Mischief a Girl can Do 37
XII.—Girls I have Known ... 57
Girls of Bourton, The. By Sarah Tytler 145, 168, 180

Hairdressers, Women as. By E. E. Dickenson 141
HINTS ON WINTER AILMENTS. By Mrs. Atkins, M.D.—
I.—Chronic Cough 5
II.—Colds, Rheumatism, and Chilblains 22
Household 62, 128

Ill-health of Women, The. By Louise F. Bryson, M.D. ... 103
Is all Knowledge Power? By Mrs. G. E. Morton 89

Jubilee Nursing Scheme, The. E. M. Waterworth 142

Keep Pace 143

Light. By Mrs. G. E. Morton ... 139
Louisa, Queen of Prussia. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 84

MOTHERS I HAVE HEARD OF. By William Luff—
I.—A Mother who was a Drinker 46
Mrs. Lorrimer's Daughter; or, Friends and Companions. By E. C. Kenyon 60

Norway, A Trip to. By Mrs. Atkins, M.D. 104, 116

Oldest Pastime in the World, The. By A. Lockyer 92
Out-of-doors in May. By Jane S. Clarke 68

Plants, In-door. By Jane S. Clarke 30

Real Water-baby, A. By Mrs. G. E. Morton 164

Sale, Lady, and her Fellow-hostages in Afghanistan. By Mrs. Henry Fawcett 7
Sea-side, Work for the. E. M. Waterworth 119
Smocking 111
Speak Gently: an "Ower True" Tale for Mothers. By Grace Stebbing 184
Story of Two New Years' Eves, A. By Mary E. Ropes 11
Suppers and Breakfasts. By I. L. Richmond 48, 64, 75, 94, 135, 150, 175, 179

Trade Combinations for Women. By Clementina Black 15
Twilight Thoughts for Wives and Mothers. By J. E. Panton ... 177
Two Faded Flowers. By Mrs. A. F. Muir 28
Two Weddings, The. By Emma Leslie 136

"Without Grudging;" or, Marjorie's Mistress. By Lina Orman Cooper 108
Women in the Nail and Chain Trade. By Ada Heather-Bigg... 70

Zenanas of India, Medical Mission Work in the. By Mary Cavalier 159, 171

POETRY.

Children at the River. By Sarah Geraldina Stock 71
Cross-purposes. By May Riley Smith 37

"He Increaseth Strength" ... 183

Indian Woman's Tribute to Lady Dufferin, An 100

Light. By Francis W. Bourdillon 27
Light in the Darkness. By John Whittier 132
Luther's Cradle Hymn 185

Ministering. By Lilian Grey ... 20
Mother's Lesson, The 176

New Year Music. By Margaret Haycraft 4

Sin of Omission, The. By Margaret Sangster 160
Stanzas to Life. By Mrs. Barbauld 136

To the Men of Kent. By Wordsworth 89

Unto the Desired Haven. By A. D. F. Randolph 60

Waters of Rest, The. By M. S. Haycraft 96
While we May 52

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